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INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1441  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 1032  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1223  
RUEHNZ/AMCONSUL AUCKLAND PRIORITY 0249  
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY PRIORITY 0654  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SUVA 000554

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [FJ](#)  
SUBJECT: FIJI UPDATE 12/12: QUIET DAY IN SUVA AS RFMF  
CLEAN-UP, INTERIM-GOVERNMENT PLANNING CONTINUE

REF: A. SUVA 553

[1](#)B. SUVA 543 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

#### Summary

[1](#)1. (C) PM Qarase said today he is seeking air options for a return to Suva; RFMF Commander Bainimarama warned against any plan to set up a "de facto government." The RFMF reportedly is sifting through applications for interim-government positions. Bainimarama asked Government CEOs to keep their bureaucracies functioning. The firing of selected bureaucrats continues. Opposition Leader Beddoes has floated his "government of national unity" proposal to the military. The RFMF PM, sounding like a politician, promised that civil servants will receive their COLAs, and an unpopular Qarase-Government increase in VAT will revert. The Fiji Chamber of Commerce chief executive said his organization welcomes the RFMF's "firm leadership." End summary.

#### Qarase, Suva, and his priorities

[1](#)2. (U) PM Qarase told an interviewer today from his home in Lau that he plans to return to Suva "as early as possible." He said he is having trouble arranging a flight, all options are full during this holiday season. Qarase said his primary goal is to restore democracy; secondary is returning to power. He wants talks among the Great Council of Chiefs, the RFMF, and the Qarase Government to find "a way out of the mess." Commodore Bainimarama alleged today that Qarase and his followers intend a "de facto government" in Fiji's West. Bainimarama warned such a plan will not be allowed.

#### Making Cabinet choices

[1](#)3. (C) We understand military leaders spent a good part of the day at the Army camp reviewing applications for ministerial positions in an interim government. The total number of applicants who have responded to an ad in last weekend's papers now reportedly totals 400. Bainimarama said publicly that all interim ministers will have to promise not to run in subsequent elections. (Qarase, Bainimarama's interim PM choice in 2000, ran in the 2001 elections, and allegedly his SDL party engaged in an "agriculture scam" to lure votes.) We know Bainimarama had a pre-existing list of proposed nominees (refs), including some of his "shadowy" advisors. The public application exercise presumably is intended to add to the mix and provide some sort of cover. Bainimarama today asked CEOs to ensure the Government functions well at this time when there are "no political

pressures."

#### Clean-up campaign claims more bureaucrats

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14. (C) RFMF Commander Bainimarama has sacked CEO Jale of the Public Services Commission and has replaced him with the CEO for Tourism, Ratu Epeli Masirewa, a former Fiji Ambassador to the U.S. Ratu Sakiusa Tuisolia, head of Airports Fiji Ltd. (AFL), also reportedly lost his job. Ratu Saki has been seen as an up-and-coming ethnic-Fijian politician. He is married to human-rights advocate Imrana Jalal, who last week received a rape threat traced to the RFMF. Ratu Saki is also a former high-level staffer in the Prime Minister's office. His rumored replacement is a former AFL CEO who reportedly left that agency's management in a shambles. Finance Ministry CEO Paula Uluinacewa, who, per ref A, was not cooperating with the coup, has also been sacked. He was another up-and-coming ethnic-Fijian.

#### Beddoes floats GNU proposal to RFMF

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15. (C) Opposition Leader Beddoes met with RFMF Chief of Staff Teleni and RFMF PM Senilagakali yesterday to test the waters for his proposal (ref B) to create a Government of National Unity (GRU), with the Ministers to be drawn from people elected to Parliament last May, people acceptable to the RFMF and not tied to Qarase, people like Beddoes. We understand that when Beddoes' asked the UK and Aussie High Commissions for views he did not receive positive feedback. They pointed out that the GRU proposal would not solve the basic issues: the coup is illegal and an RFMF-vetted PM and Cabinet are not a constitutional solution.

#### VAT and government salaries

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16. (C) Senilagakali told the media today that civil-service salary payments and additions to COLAs will be paid. He said he is cutting the PM's salary by 10%. He added that the RFMF government will not impose a VAT increase called for under PM Qarase's 2007 budget. That VAT increase, seen as necessary to finance next year's spending, was unpopular when announced in November. Fired Finance CEO Uluinacewa told the media that, absent a VAT increase, major spending cuts will have to take place, including in the civil service. The RFMF spokesman Leweni revealed to the media today that 1000 territorial (army reserve) forces have not been paid for three weeks of recent active duty. He said a reason was that civil servants in IT positions had not been showing up at work to process vouchers. Leweni said payments will flow shortly.

#### Fiji Chamber of Commerce opts for RFMF

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17. (U) Taito Waradi, chief executive of the Fiji Chamber of Commerce, announced today that his business organization believes "firm leadership" is needed at this time, and the RFMF is providing it.

DINGER